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Fire and Aviation Bureau

Subject: Policy and Procedures for Critical Incident Management

Author: Critical Incident Management Task Force Status: Draft

The purpose of this policy is to ensure a thorough and timely response to critical incidents, including those that may involve a serious injury or fatality. The policy is intended to make certain that the emergency care of involved personnel is the top priority. It is also intended to provide guidance and direction for scene protection, managing the critical incident, conducting appropriate levels of investigation, providing training, and capturing lessons learned related to critical incident response.

I. Authority

Montana Code Annotated (MCA) 2-15-112(1)(b).

- (1) Except as otherwise provided by law, each department head shall:**
- (b) establish the policy to be followed by the department and employees:**

II. Policy and Procedures

Critical Incident: A fatality, serious injury, or other event that may have serious long-term adverse impacts on the agency, its employees, their families, or a community.

Care of Involved Personnel

The first priority for all critical incidents is to initiate appropriate life saving procedures, including applying first aid and/or requesting emergency services for the injured or afflicted person(s). Obtaining and providing for emergency life-saving measures takes priority over all other aspects of Critical Incident Management. This not only includes medical care for all personnel involved or affected at the incident, but also includes the opportunity for Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) for those who may not be physically injured. Key CISD factors to consider by first responders are included in the Critical Incident First Response Checklist. Additional information about CISD is found in Fire Management Bureau's 900 Manual.

A decision on whether the incident is a life-safety emergency or non-life-safety emergency event is critical. The Incident Commander or Chief of Party at the scene needs to determine what level of treatment is required, as well as the means of transport needed; the decision must be based on the best available information and recommendations of the most qualified medical personnel present.

Care for involved personnel includes proper and timely notification to immediate family members, next of kin, and involved agencies. Those in charge at the scene are expected to notify the Line Officer at the first possible opportunity after a critical incident has occurred. The Line

Officer (beginning with Unit Manager) is then expected to follow the notification procedures outlined in the Notification Checklist found in Fire Management Bureau's 900 Manual.

Scene Protection

Once appropriate life-saving measures have been accomplished, protection of the critical incident scene becomes an agency priority. The Incident Commander or Chief of Party is responsible for taking control of the critical incident scene.

As-soon-as it is safe to do so, the Incident Commander or Chief of Party must secure the critical incident site. All critical incident sites must be physically secured on a 24-hour basis to preserve evidence and protect personal and government property. Access to the incident site must be limited only to personnel authorized by the jurisdictional line officer(s) or Investigation Team Leader. Only the jurisdictional line officer(s) have the authorization to reduce or order the removal of scene protection measures.

As part of scene protection, communication must be controlled to guarantee the privacy of involved personnel. Key communication factors to consider by first responders are included in the Critical Incident First Response Checklist. A spokesperson must be designated by the Line Officer(s) to speak to the media and interested parties immediately after the Line Officer(s) notification of a critical incident. In the case of a fatality, a Liaison Officer must be designated by the Line Officer(s) to communicate and coordinate with the family members. If more than one agency has personnel involved in the critical incident, a Liaison Officer must also be designated by the Line Officer(s) within the first 12-hour period to communicate and coordinate with the other agencies.

Incident Management

Agency personnel whose job includes working or responding to situations where a critical incident may occur (like wildland-fire engine crews) must be provided with a Critical Incident Pocket Card that identifies agency performance expectations in the event of a critical incident.

Within the first 12-hour period following a critical incident, the Incident Commander or Chief of Party and Line Officer must finalized the Critical Incident First Response Checklist that identifies key actions needed and assigns individuals responsible for completing key actions. The Critical Incident First Response Checklist is located in the Fire Management Bureau's 900 Manual and should be provided in day-planner format for agency incident commanders, chiefs of parties, line officers, and line officer representatives.

If a Safenet is filed in correlation with a critical incident, the Investigation Flowchart provides the details for an agency investigation and response.

If the critical incident is coupled with another incident, such as a fatality occurring on a wildland fire, timely decisions must be made about management of the primary incident (the fire), management of the critical incident (the fatality), and coordination between the two. The primary goal is for the agency to safely and effectively deal with the situation at hand. Key coordination factors to consider by first responders and line officers are included in the Critical Incident First Response Checklist.

It is acceptable during a critical incident (fatality) for the responders working on a primary incident (fire) to simply withdraw and regroup. The Critical Incident First Response Checklist includes a quick analysis of the key factors that must be addressed in order to ensure safe and effective management of both primary and critical incidents. Primary incident resources should not re-engage until the Critical Incident Response Checklist is completed.

Critical Incident Investigation

The Department will complete an Initial Investigation for all critical incidents. The local Line Officer at the Unit Manager or higher level will be responsible for forming or ordering an Initial Investigation Team. The Investigation Team must receive a thorough briefing and agency expectations clearly spelled out in a written Delegation of Authority. In the case of a fatality, the Area Manager will serve as the responsible Line Officer. Investigation Teams should be expected to arrive at the incident within 24 hours of being ordered.

Recommended investigation team compositions and investigation requirements are to be based on complexity of the critical incident. An Investigation Flowchart located in Fire Management Bureau's 900 Manual provides agency line officers with the sequential and/or escalating types of investigations and corresponding team composition recommendations. The Investigation Flowchart also includes the requirements for the agency to respond to a Safenet.

Initial Investigation Teams should strive to complete their investigations within 48 hours of receiving their Delegation of Authority. If based on the Initial Investigation there is a need to do additional or continued investigation(s), it must be identified and delineated in the Initial Investigation Report, and signed off on by the Line Officer. The initial investigation is directed at fact finding. Subsequent or additional investigation(s) may occur based on the results of the initial investigation, or as a result using the Investigation Flowchart.

Training and Lessons Learned

In order to identify learning opportunities and develop training and standards to reduce the injury or death to employees and cooperators, all critical incidents will be subject to an After Action Review (AAR). The Training and Safety Team will be responsible for organizing and completing the AAR. The results of the AAR may cause additional review or other actions directed at situational learning.

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